

PUNISHER



PARENTAL ADVISORY

MARVEL 7

AARON • SAIZ
AZACETA • STEWART



ART BY PHIL NOTO

Mike Pasciullo | 1972 - 2022

With heavy hearts, Marvel remembers our dear friend and colleague Mike Pasciullo, who passed away earlier this year.

Growing up, Mike found a passion for collectibles and trading cards. After diving into comics and becoming a Marvel expert, he went on to work for Fleer, where he became an important collaborator on art development and creative direction for Marvel's trading card sets, including now-classic sets like DC vs. Marvel, Amalgam, and many more.

Through his 25-plus years at Marvel, Mike went on to lead the company's marketing strategy across publishing, films, television, and more. His work included landmark campaigns for seminal Marvel comic book moments like *Secret Invasion*, *Marvel NOW!*, *Civil War*, and many others, and key contributions in establishing the vision behind Marvel Studios' early promotional strategy, engaging fans with unforgettable live events and promotions at conventions and beyond. After

marketing multiple MCU films, he brought that fan experience to Marvel Television's projects, including *Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Marvel's Daredevil*, *Marvel's Luke Cage*, *Marvel's The Punisher*, *Marvel's Iron Fist*, *Marvel's Jessica Jones*, and *Marvel's The Defenders*, and Marvel's animation projects for Spider-Man, Guardians of the Galaxy, Avengers, and more.

Building on his knowledge of sports, Mike also helped weave together Marvel's fandom with sports fans through Marvel-themed game days, Marvel giveaways at sports events, and other Marvel activations across the country with Major League and Minor League sports teams that continue to this day.

Mike was beloved at Marvel, and he will be remembered for his kindness, creativity, optimism, and humor. His memory will always be with us, and he will live on forever within the Marvel family and beyond. ■

AFTER RETIRED MARINE FRANK CASTLE'S WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE KILLED BY STRAY GUNFIRE DURING A SHOOT-OUT IN CENTRAL PARK, HE BEGAN A ONE-MAN VIGILANTE WAR ON CRIME. ARMED WITH A VAST ARSENAL AND GRIM DETERMINATION, HE BECAME THE...

PUNISHER

THE CULT OF ASSASSINS KNOWN AS THE HAND MADE FRANK CASTLE AN OFFER HE COULDN'T REFUSE: BECOME THEIR HIGH SLAYER IN EXCHANGE FOR THE RESURRECTION OF HIS LONG-DEAD WIFE, MARIA. FRANK IS JUST ONE IN A LONG LINE OF FABLED FISTS OF THE BEAST, THE HAND HAVING OBSERVED HIM SINCE HIS CHILDHOOD. FRANK NOW RESIDES IN THE HAND'S FORTRESS IN JAPAN ALONG WITH AN UNSTABLE MARIA, WHOSE MEMORY OF HER TRAGIC PAST IS SLOWLY RETURNING. BUT THE HAND HAS BEEN UNABLE TO PROPERLY RESURRECT FRANK AND MARIA'S CHILDREN. FRANK HAS ALSO BEEN MANIFESTING SUPERNATURAL POWERS DUE TO HIS GROWING CONNECTION TO THE DEMONIC BEAST.

ARES, THE GOD OF WAR, IS LEADING A CULT OF DISCIPLES WHO DEAL IN DANGEROUS, HIGH-TECH WEAPONRY. FRANK ATTACKED ARES, WHO HAS BEEN ANGERED BY FRANK'S ALLIANCE WITH THE HAND. ARES DEFEATED FRANK AND LEFT HIM FOR DEAD, AFTER WHICH THE HAND BROUGHT FRANK BACK TO JAPAN AND HEALED HIM. HE WAS THEN CONFRONTED BY HIS OLD NEMESIS...DAREDEVIL!

THE KING OF KILLERS

Book TWO, Chapter ONE

"THE MAN AND THE DEVIL"

by JASON AARON, JESÚS SAIZ & PAUL AZACETA

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"IT'S ALWAYS THE
SAME DREAM."

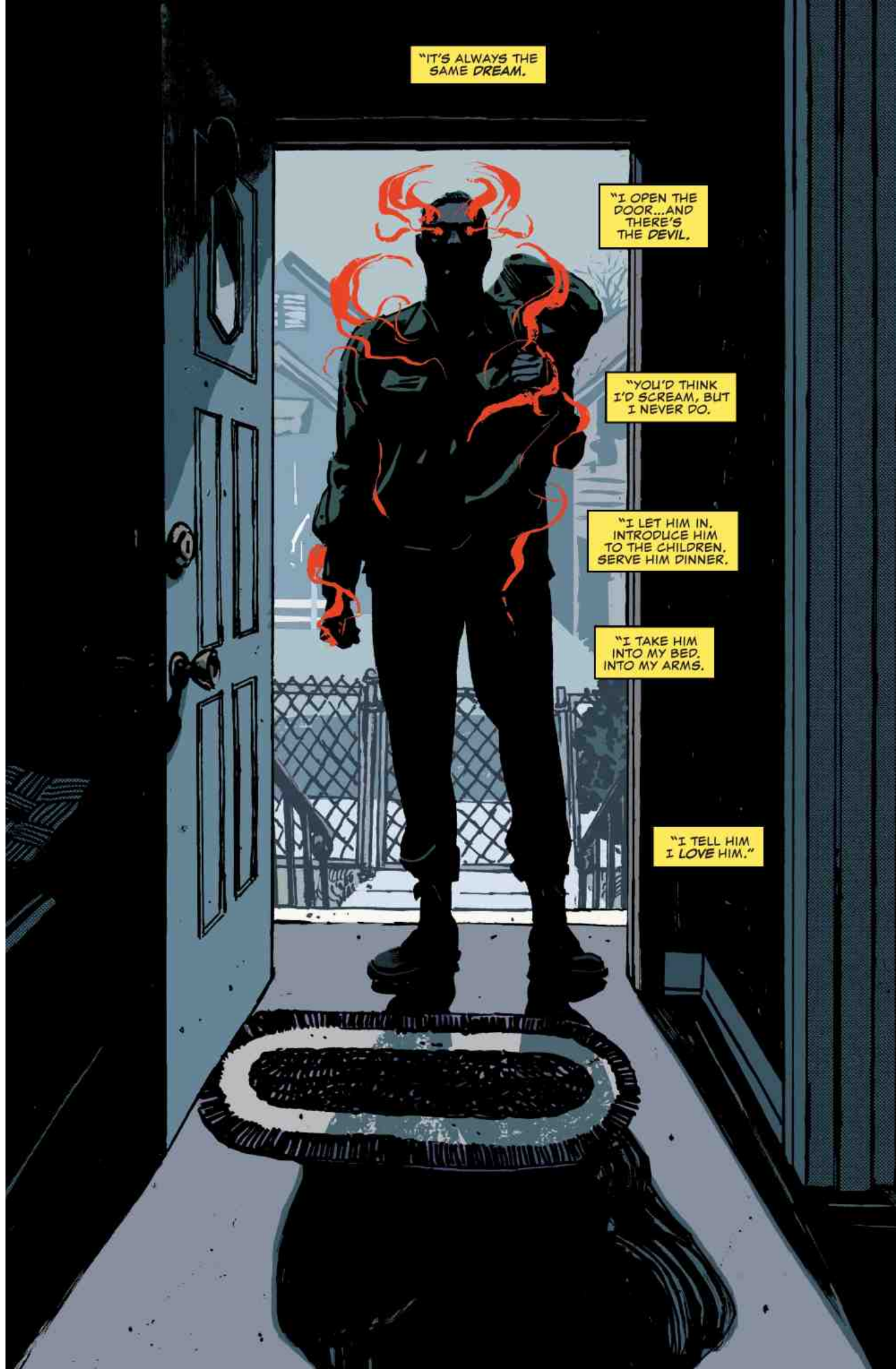
"I OPEN THE
DOOR...AND
THERE'S
THE DEVIL."

"YOU'D THINK
I'D SCREAM, BUT
I NEVER DO."

"I LET HIM IN.
INTRODUCE HIM
TO THE CHILDREN.
SERVE HIM DINNER."

"I TAKE HIM
INTO MY BED.
INTO MY ARMS."

"I TELL HIM
I LOVE HIM."





AND WHEN DID YOU BEGIN HAVING THIS DREAM?

A FEW WEEKS AGO, I GUESS. RIGHT AFTER...



RIGHT AFTER FRANK CAME HOME.



AND YOU WORRY, MARIA, THAT THIS DREAM... IS *SINFUL* ON YOUR PART? CASTING YOUR WAR-HERO HUSBAND AS SOME SORT OF DEMON?



NOT A DEMON. THE DEVIL.

WHEN WE... MAKE LOVE...IN THE DREAM...HE TELLS ME TO CALL HIM THE BEAST.

NO, FATHER. IT'S NOT MY SINS I'M WORRIED ABOUT.



I UNDERSTAND. AFTER SO MANY YEARS APART, IT'S NOT SURPRISING YOU'D BE WORRIED THAT FRANK MIGHT'VE BEEN UNFAITHFUL WHILE HE WAS OVERSEAS.

I DON'T THINK THAT'S IT, FATHER.



YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT HIS SOUL, MARIA.

TELL FRANK HE NEEDS TO COME SEE ME. FOR *CONFESSION*. I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING A FEW "HAIL MARYS" WON'T FIX.

I BELIEVE IN THE GRACE OF A JUST AND LOVING GOD.



I BELIEVE IN
THE POWER
OF PRAYER.



I PRAYED FOR
MY HUSBAND
EVERY NIGHT THAT
HE WAS AWAY.

TIME TO
GO HOME,
KIDS.

WILL THAT
MAN STILL
BE THERE?

THAT
MAN IS YOUR
FATHER, LISA.
LET'S GO.



I PRAYED THAT GOD
WOULD KEEP FRANK SAFE
AND STRONG. AND WHEN
HE CAME HOME, IT WAS
CLEAR...HE WAS
STRONGER THAN EVER.

MOMMY...

JUST
KEEP WALKING,
DARLING.

HELP US,
SICKLY...SO
SICKLY...



GOD
BLESS THE
BEAST.

I JUST DON'T
KNOW THAT GOD
HAD ANYTHING
TO DO WITH IT.

**THE CITADEL OF THE HAND.
NOW.**



THIS IS BEYOND THE PALE, FRANK. EVEN FOR YOU.



THE FIST OF THE BEAST IS A SOLDIER FOR THE SICKLY ONES. THE GREATEST BUTCHERS THIS WORLD HAS EVER SEEN.

YOU MAY THINK YOU'RE USING THE HAND FOR YOUR OWN ENDS, BUT I ASSURE YOU...



...YOU'RE THE ONE BEING USED. FOR RUIN AND SLAUGHTER.

AND WHERE DO YOU THINK THAT LEAVES YOU AND ME?

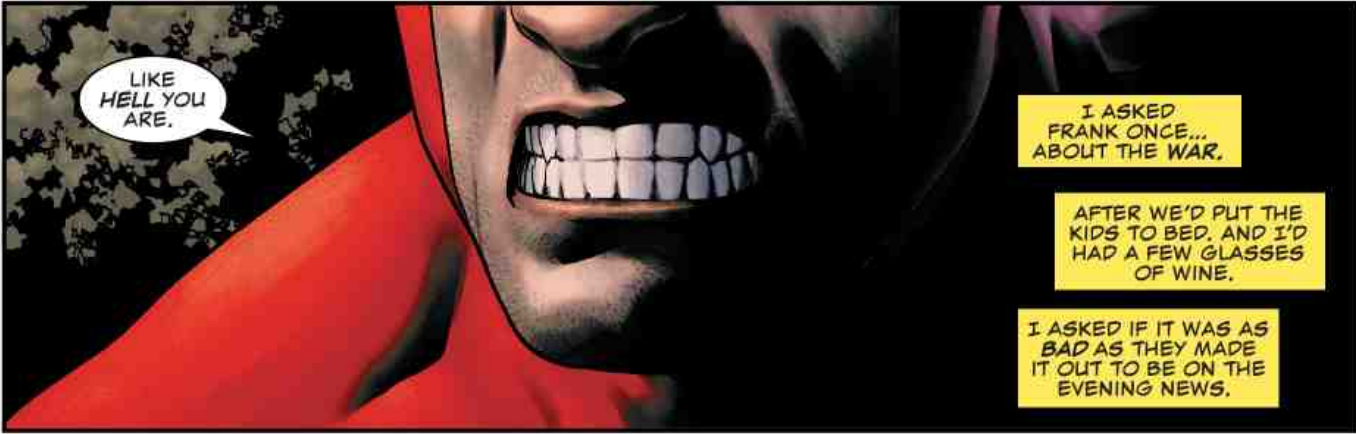
SAME PLACE WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN.

WITH ME NOT NEEDING YOUR DAMN PERMISSION.

GET OUT.







LIKE
HELL YOU
ARE.

I ASKED
FRANK ONCE...
ABOUT THE WAR.

AFTER WE'D PUT THE
KIDS TO BED, AND I'D
HAD A FEW GLASSES
OF WINE.

I ASKED IF IT WAS AS
BAD AS THEY MADE
IT OUT TO BE ON THE
EVENING NEWS.



HE STARED AT THE CEILING
FOR A LONG MOMENT, LOST
IN HIS THOUGHTS, WALKING THE
HILLS OF SOME FARAWAY LAND.

THEN HE ROLLED
OVER AND PRETENDED
TO SLEEP...

...HOPING I DIDN'T
CATCH WHAT HAD
FLICKERED ACROSS
HIS FACE BEFORE
HE COULD STOP IT.

BUT I DID. I
KNEW **LONGING**
WHEN I SAW IT.

I SAW IT IN
EVERY MIRROR.

LONGING FOR
A WORLD THAT
MADE **SENSE**
TO YOU.

FOR A WORLD
YOU COULD LOVE.



I WAS WORKING
AS A RECEPTIONIST
FOR FATHER FORD
AT ST. JOSEPH'S.

THE ONLY JOB FRANK
COULD FIND WAS SCRUBBING
GUT TRAPS IN THE
MEATPACKING DISTRICT.



HE'D COME HOME EVERY
NIGHT STINKING OF OFFAL.
I THINK HE LIKED IT THAT
WAY, BECAUSE IT KEPT
ME AWAY FROM HIM.



I REALIZED I WAS ALWAYS
WATCHING HIM OUT OF THE
CORNER OF MY EYE, WHENEVER
HE WAS AROUND THE CHILDREN.
CHILDREN WHO WERE
ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED OF HIM.



BUT IN TRUTH,
HE WAS EVEN
MORE AFRAID
OF THEM.

AFTER ABOUT
A MONTH, HE
STARTED SLEEPING
MOST NIGHTS IN A
TENT OUT BACK.



AT FIRST, I'D CRY MYSELF TO SLEEP, ALONE IN MY BED.

BUT IT WAS HARDER WHEN HE WAS THERE, MOVING THROUGH THE HOUSE LIKE A GHOST STILL PRETENDING TO BE ALIVE.

LIKE A BODY GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS. LIKE HE WAS JUST...



...WAITING. WAITING FOR SOME OTHER LIFE TO START.

MAYBE HE WAS PRAYING TOO.



I JUST DON'T THINK WE WERE PRAYING FOR THE SAME DELIVERANCE.



EVERY FEW WEEKS, THERE'D BE A DIFFERENT VET AT THE DOOR. LIKE HOLY DISCIPLES MAKING A SACRED PILGRIMAGE.

THEY'D BRING GIFTS, ENVELOPES OF CASH, ALL OF WHICH FRANK REFUSED.





I'D BEEN DEALING WITH PELVIC PAIN SINCE FRANK JR. I ENDED UP NEEDING A HYSTERECTOMY.

I HAD TO BE IN THE HOSPITAL FOR A FEW DAYS, FRANK WATCHED THE KIDS.



HE WAS SUPPOSED TO PICK ME UP, HE DIDN'T.

FRANK?



I CAME HOME TO FIND A HOUSE THAT LOOKED LIKE A DISASTER AREA.

KIDS?



AND EMPTY BEDS IN MY CHILDREN'S ROOM.



FRANK JR.! LISA!

I PANICKED.



IN THAT MOMENT, I REALIZED HOW TRULY AND DEEPLY AFRAID I'D BECOME OF THE MAN I MARRIED.

FRANK!



I TOLD MYSELF I HAD NO IDEA WHO HE WAS ANYMORE, WHO THAT WAR HAD MADE HIM. MAYBE I'D NEVER REALLY KNOWN HIM AT ALL.

FRANK!!!

IT WAS THEN THAT
I SAW WHAT THOSE
VETS HAD SEEN.

I SAW
LT. FRANK CASTLE,
U.S. MARINE CORPS.

THE MAN WHO
ALWAYS KEPT HIS
PEOPLE SAFE.



IF I DIDN'T KNOW
WHO MY HUSBAND
WAS...IT WAS ONLY
BECAUSE HE DIDN'T
KNOW YET EITHER.

BUT GIVEN TIME...
AND THE GRACE OF
GOD...I HAD FAITH
THAT HE COULD
FIGURE IT OUT.



I HAD FAITH IN
THE POWER OF
OUR FAMILY.

I HAD FAITH
IN FRANK.



I LEFT THEM SLEEPING
IN THE TENT AND WENT
TO BED ALONE.

FRANK CAME IN
DURING THE MIDDLE
OF THE NIGHT. SLID
IN BESIDE ME.



HE PULLED ME CLOSE,
HELD ME IN A WAY HE
NEVER HAD.



IN THE DARKNESS...
I COULD FEEL HIM
TREMBLING.



HE TOLD ME HE LOVED
ME, WITH A VOICE I'D
NEVER HEARD FROM HIS
LIPS. A WHISPER FROM A
PLACE HE'D BURIED.



HE TRIED TO TELL ME
A STORY, ABOUT BEING
A BOY ON A ROOFTOP,
WHEN SOMETHING
HORRIBLE HAPPENED.



HE TRIED. BUT HE
DIDN'T SEEM TO
HAVE THE WORDS.



SO WE JUST HELD
EACH OTHER UNTIL
THE SUN CAME UP.



THAT WAS WHEN I
FIRST UNDERSTOOD...
THAT FRANK HADN'T
GONE OVERSEAS
BECAUSE HE WAS
LOOKING FOR WAR.



WELCOME
HOME,
FRANK.

HE'D GONE
BECAUSE HE
WAS RUNNING
FROM ONE.









AFTER MY POSSESSION, I HAD DR. STRANGE TEACH ME A SPELL, JUST IN CASE THE HAND EVER TRIED IT AGAIN.



IT'S AN EXORCISM SPELL. AND I EXPECT IT'S GOING TO HURT.



I SURE AS HELL HOPE IT DOES.

BEHOLD THE CROSS OF THE LORD! DEPART, UNCLEAN SPIRIT!

BE UPROOTED AND EXPELLED FROM THIS CREATURE OF... GOD.



IN NOMINE PATRIS...

HRRRAAAAAGGH!!!

THINGS WERE DIFFERENT
AFTER THAT NIGHT. THE KIDS
WOULD GO OUT TO HIS TENT,
AND THERE'D BE TIMES...YOU'D
EVEN HEAR FRANK LAUGHING.



YOU COULD SEE HIM
TRYING TO THROW OFF
WHATEVER CHAINS WERE
BINDING HIM, A LITTLE
MORE, DAY AFTER DAY.

I SOMEHOW EVEN
GOT HIM TO AGREE
TO SHOW UP FOR
CONFESSION.



HE WAS IN THERE...
FOR WHAT SEEMED
LIKE A LONG TIME.



FATHER
FORD?



FRANK?
WHAT DID...?

FATHER FORD
NEVER LOOKED ME
IN THE EYE AGAIN.

A WEEK LATER,
I WAS TOLD MY
JOB AT THE
CHURCH HAD
BEEN ELIMINATED.

FRANK STARTED
SLEEPING IN HIS
TENT ALONE AGAIN.





AS MUCH AS
HE WAS EVER
ALONE AT ALL.











FRANK,
THERE ARE OTHER
CHURCHES. MAYBE
WE COULD FIND
ONE WE BOTH
FEEL--

I'M NOT
GOING BACK
TO CHURCH,
MARIA.



IT'S NOT
SAFE.

NOT SAFE?
FRANK, IT'S A
CHURCH.



THE KIDS
TOLD ME WHAT
HAPPENED LAST TIME
YOU TOOK THEM. THE
CREEPY MAN IN THE
ALLEY OUTSIDE. THEY
STILL HAVE DREAMS
ABOUT HIM.

THEY
DIDN'T...
TELL ME
THAT.



THIS CITY
IS A DANGEROUS
PLACE. FROM NOW
ON, WHEREVER YOU
GO, I WANT TO
KNOW THAT YOU'RE
PROTECTED.





I'VE BEEN HAVING THE SAME DREAM...EVERY NIGHT SINCE...SINCE WE WENT FOR OUR WALK THROUGH THE WOODS.



I DREAM THAT THERE'S A DEVIL AT THE DOOR.



YOU'RE SAFE HERE, MARIA.



OF COURSE I AM. I'M WITH YOU.



DID YOU FINISH YOUR WORK?

NO. I... IT'LL TAKE A BIT LONGER. BUT SOON, I PROMISE IT'LL ALL BE--

THE KIDS AREN'T COMING HOME, ARE THEY?









NEXT:

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#8



FRANK CASTLE WANTS TO END HIS WAR ONCE AND FOR ALL. BUT THE GOD OF WAR HAS OTHER IDEAS. AND NOW ARES IS COMING FOR THE PUNISHER WITH AN ARMY OF HEAVILY ARMED APOSTLES AT HIS BACK, LOOKING TO TURN FRANK BACK INTO HIS OLD SELF BY MURDERING HIS FAMILY ALL OVER AGAIN.

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